

# OCEANS

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TRAVEL ■ PEOPLE ■ SCIENCE ■ DISCOVERY

**TED DANSON**  
Saving The Seas



- **EVERYBODY'S GOING SURFING**  
On surfari vacations and boogie boards
- **YUGOSLAVIA'S BOLD COAST**
- **DIVING FOR THE RIO'S TREASURE**
- **TANGLED UP WITH THE GIANT OCTOPUS**



A full-page photograph of a surfer riding a massive, curling wave. The surfer is positioned in the lower center, leaning forward with arms outstretched for balance. The wave is a deep, dark blue, and the water is splashing into a white, misty spray around the surfer. The sky above is a lighter blue with some white clouds. The overall mood is one of intense action and natural power.

SLICING DOWN A  
"DOUBLE  
OVERHEAD," A  
WAVE TWICE YOUR  
HEIGHT, OR  
RIDING A GENTLE  
SWELL, LIKE THE  
SILVER-HAIRED  
DIEHARD,  
OPPOSITE, THE  
SURF'S STILL UP.

*Chairmen  
of the*

# BOARD



**Onto  
boogie  
boards  
and into  
middle  
age, born-  
again  
surfers  
catch the  
new wave**

Whoopi Goldberg understands. When business partner Hector Lizardi visits the comedienne in Malibu, she keeps a watchful eye on him all during their day-long meetings. At the first sign that he's getting wound up and tense she'll glare at him and deliver this salubrious command: "Hector, go get in the water." The 38-year-old Lizardi drops everything, grabs his board and runs. "Whoopi knows a good

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**BY JOHN GRISSIM**



surf session will totally revive me and clear my mind," he explains with a chuckle. "In a very real sense, coming back to surfing has been my salvation."

His story has a distinctly '80s resonance. A native of Puerto Rico, Lizardi moved to California 20 years ago and surfed all through his teens. He graduated from San Jose State and in time became one of the top entertainment-tour accountants in the country. His clients included Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, Prince and the Grateful Dead. He traveled the world. The money rolled in.

"I was living the high-profile, fast-lane life," Lizardi recalls, "which meant lots of booze and drugs. And I was paying a horrible price. At one point I asked myself: 'What can I do that will make me feel really good like I once did?' And the answer came to me—surfing. I remembered as a teenager that no matter how bad the surf was, or how badly I surfed, I always came out feeling like a million dollars."

"I got a board and a wetsuit and went to Santa Cruz and got into the water again. I was all spaghetti arms and out of shape and I floundered about like wild. But I was back. I could feel it."

Lizardi abandoned drugs and alcohol, turned his life around and has since enjoyed his career immensely. He confesses he surreptitiously arranged Whoopi's itinerary for her recent Australian tour so that they would be swinging by some of the best surf breaks in the country—that is, in the world.

My own surfing baptism occurred one hot day in 1968 at the Halekulani Hotel on Waikiki Beach. A fortyish-looking beach boy named Nathan handed me a long, heavy surfboard and pointed to the distant curl of a breaking wave. "Good fo' first time, bra," he said with a sugar cane smile.

I never caught a wave that day but I returned to shore a changed man. I'd had a bare inkling of "surf stoke," adrenaline stoking the body's fire, and I was determined to have more.

Over the years, I have remained out of surfing for long periods, even though I lived right on the beach north of San Francisco. But recently



BOB BARBOUR

BOB BARBOUR

**THESE JOINTS ARE JUMPING. IN THIS GALLERY OF SURFING POSITIONS, THE CARDINAL RULE IS: HANG ON TO THE BOARD—IN A CROUCH, IN A CURL, AIRBORNE AND PADDLING OUT, CHEST UP AND SITTING DOWN. BALANCE IS ALL.**



WOODY WOODWORTH

BOB BARBOUR







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**THREADING A  
SHIMMERING TUBE OF  
WATER IS THE SURFER'S  
PRESCRIPTION FOR  
DAILY STRESS.**

I've been getting back in the water to catch a few waves and hoot like a stoked school kid. To my surprise, I find myself in the line-up not with high school hotshots, but men in their thirties, forties and fifties, most of them working professionals with wives and families. Like me, a large proportion have recently gotten back in touch with surfing; others never lost touch.

Expert surf kahunas on both coasts

confirmed my first-hand impressions. People who once surfed and gave it up are returning to the ocean in droves. There is even a whole new wave of recruits to the sport who have discovered the less physically demanding variation using foam body boards and fins. You don't have to be an olympic swimmer to ride these boogie boards; parents use them to get out in the line-up with their children. Boogie boarding is only one in-





ILLUSTRATION: AGOOD

indicator of the way in which surfing has become a two-generation sport and a full-blown upmarket industry. There are travel agencies that specialize in booking "surfaris" the world over [see sidebar] both for families as well as for stoked-again surfers approaching, or well into, middle age. A monthly newsletter details wave conditions at hundreds of surf breaks everywhere on the planet. There is even a Museum of Surfing in Santa

Cruz, California, replete with surfing memorabilia, historical displays on the evolution of the sport and its music, and of course, antique boards, including one 14-foot long balsa wood behemoth.

**P**ick almost any day along the California coast, especially in the months of Daylight Savings Time, and watch the BMWs and Saabs pull up to the urban surf spots.

The drivers peel off their coats and ties, suit up and head for the water, cradling boards that were in fashion ten, 15, even 20 years ago. Others bring fins and foam boogie boards. Often as not, they'll surf alone, away from the pack—the mark of the quintessential soul surfer.

Doug Thompson is a case in point. Months ago, the 41-year-old documentary filmmaker and video distribution executive was stuck in Los



## GOING ON SURFARI

Surfaris have come a long way since the days when everyone would pile into their VW campers and trek down to Baja. These days you can sign on for a beachfront house in Barbados or a Spanish villa, complete with maid service and be driven to primo surf spots by a local guide.

Gary Lane, who runs Morris Overseas Tours of Melbourne Beach, Florida, says that his clientele is mostly "people in their thirties, forties and older, who have only recently gotten back into surfing. Some bring their families."

Lane's World Wide Surfing Adventures has trips to Barbados, Costa Rica, the Bahamas (Abaco and Eleuthera), France, New Zealand, Australia and Spain. Also available are considerably more out-of-the-way adventures to Peru, Indonesia, Tonga, Fiji and New Guinea. Tour-package prices are based on Miami departures (with four people for seven days and six nights) and come in three categories—the swell deal, the surfing deluxe, and the Royal Kahuna (which often includes a bareboat yacht charter and outboard-powered inflatable boat.)

The Bahamas trip starts at \$459 per person, including round-trip airfares, accommodations and transfers. The Royal Kahuna rate of \$819 per person includes meals and a 18-foot Boston Whaler. Tobago, British West Indies is \$439 to \$679 per person.

Costa Rica starts at \$439. And the surfer deluxe trip for Peru runs \$539 per person.

For the brochure and video of surf spots and information on bookings, contact: *Morris Overseas Tours*, 418 Fourth Avenue, Suite A, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951. Tel. (407) 725-4809. FAX (407) 725-7956.

Caribbean Watersports Vacations, of St. Augustine Beach, Florida, is less frilly and more regional in its package offerings. "Our clients run the gamut from high school and college kids on spring break, to adults in their late thirties and early forties," says the company's head George Taylor. "Many of them are parents going on vacation with their teenaged kids who surf."

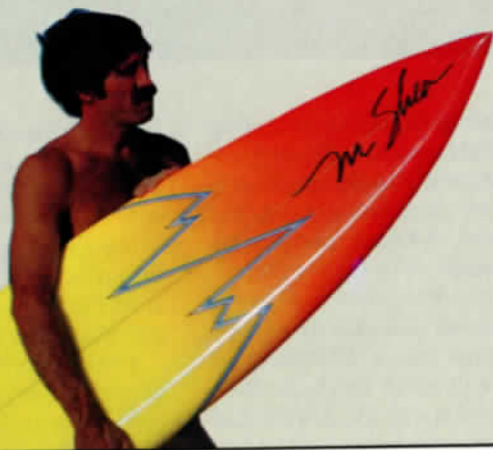
A charter for four people to Bahama's Elbow Key runs \$350 per person (including round-trip airfares, taxi, ferry, and a two-bedroom oceanfront house for a week). Contact: *Caribbean Watersports Vacations*, 101 F Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL, 32084. Tel. (904) 471-5558.

If you'd like to track surf conditions at your destination, or keep a weather eye on hot spots around the world, you might want to subscribe to *The Surf Report*, a monthly summary and forecast of worldwide surfing conditions published by *Surfer* magazine. Write to: P.O. Box 1028, Dana Point, CA 92629. A subscription is \$30.

—JG



Angeles freeway traffic. "There I was in my Jeep Cherokee, talking on my car phone like everybody else around me," Thompson recalls. "I was tense and pale from no sun, totally stressed out after ten straight twelve-hour days. And I said to myself, 'My God, what am I doing? For more than a year now, I've turned my back on the ocean, on the waves. I gotta get back in the water.' So I took the next exit, drove back home, rescheduled all my appointments, grabbed my old nose-rider from the garage and literally ran to the beach. What a relief! I'll never



BOB BARBER





BOB BARBOUR

stay away that long again."

"I'm seeing a lot of people like that these days," says Bob Wise, owner of Wise Surfboards in San Francisco and acknowledged kahuna of the area scene. "They're older and they don't go in for the Day-Glo wetsuits, but you can see from just watching the way they handle themselves in the water that they have more wave knowledge."

Their East Coast counterparts are there at Fox Hill, New Hampshire, waiting for the prime waves—or in central New Jersey from Manasquan

to Casino Pier, or at breaks along the Carolinas, Florida and the Texas coast. Few of these locales are ever spotlighted in the surfing magazines.

San Francisco is another. Yet the city's Ocean Beach is six miles of gnarly, shifting peaks, vicious rips, steep quicksand drop-offs and powerful longshore currents and, during the winter, has the biggest waves this side of Waimea Bay. So nasty is Ocean Beach's reputation that until the late '50s it was illegal to so much as wade at the edge of the surf line.

*[Continued on page 64]*

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**UNDER THE  
SHADOW OF THE  
CALIFORNIA CLIFFS,  
A RIDER LEANS  
PRECARIOUSLY  
INTO THE  
MOUNTAINOUS  
SURGE.**



# Surf

[Continued from page 29]

"No doubt about it, the place is hair ball," jokes Dr. Mark Rennecker, a 36-year-old physician who began surfing as a teenager in Santa Monica and never lost touch. "It's so challenging and complex. Like a really good golf course, the place makes you use every club in your bag."

Fellow physician Craig Wilson, assistant medical director at Laguna Honda hospital, frequently surfs Ocean Beach with Rennecker, as does Rennecker's neighbor, screenwriter Tony Peckham. All three are charter members of the Double Overhead Association, very likely the only big-wave club in the world.

To be a member you have to have your picture taken surfing Ocean Beach on a wave at least twice as high as you are—double overhead. Rennecker co-founded the club with Bob Wise more as a casual goof than anything else. Meetings are held in the basement of Wise's surf shop. So far the DOA has only 15 members, all of them men, most from business and the professions.

Says Rennecker: "They're guys who not only are successful, but are successful in juggling job and family schedules so they can sneak away for a few hours to catch the surf here when it's good."

The ultimate scheduler is unquestionably DOA member emeritus, Bill Driess, 38, a commodities trader and computer whiz with a Harvard-MIT MBA. The peak winter surf season would generally find Driess "on surfari" south in Big Sur or north near Mendocino, that is until he recently emigrated with his family to Australia, no doubt for the monster surf.

"Bill would pull up to a pay phone and call Chicago and New York for the market quotes," Rennecker marvels. "He'd hook up his IBM laptop to the car's cigarette lighter and use a modem to download all the quotes into the computer. Then he'd sit there for a while and pore over tons of information. Finally, he'd phone his office and call in his buy-and-sell orders. It was incredible. It'd take him about an hour. Then he was

back in the water."

"I made a conscious decision to enter the insecure world of writing so I would have the flexible hours I needed to surf," explains Tony Peckham. The screenwriter left his native South Africa seven years ago to escape the country's social upheaval and has recently completed work on the movie thriller *Assassination with Cause*. "The trade-off is no weekly paycheck, but I'm able to live the way I want. When I work, I work better. I'm less stressed."

Actually, for all their credentials as upstanding fellows from San Francisco's business and professions, the DOA members are committed hardcore watermen in a class by themselves. A far more numerous category are the more casual surfers like Jack Roddy, a Santa Cruz corporate lawyer in his early fifties and the father of two sons.

"For eighteen years I didn't surf," Roddy recalls. "Then in 1978, I got back into the water and realized the joy and fun I'd been missing all those years." Roddy keeps himself in shape with yoga exercises. "I'll be on dawn patrol most mornings. Catching a wave for me is really important. If I don't get in a session at least weekly, and get that rush, life turns into whips and jangles."

"I don't need to catch a wave," says Roddy's longtime friend Bill Wilson, "it's enough just getting into the ocean. I completely relax. I feel uplifted, in tune with my feelings. It's always a cleansing thing." Wilson, also in his fifties, is a teacher and coach in Berkeley who works with handicapped children. "If I myself were handicapped or injured, I'd get out there in an inner tube. I get just as high body surfing, or boogie boarding."

## HOW TO BOOGIE

For older initiates, the body board has been a godsend, the perfectly respectable shortcut to serious stoke.

In the early '70s, two California surfing-entrepreneurs named Tom Morey and Bob Bzbad developed a soft-foam, floating kickboard and dubbed it the Morey Boogie Board. All you need to do is slip on a pair of fins and, holding it like a kick-

board, swim into the line-up and take off on a wave. Once you're going, you pull your chest up onto the board and bend your knees to keep legs and feet clear of the water. You turn by leaning to one side or the other. Crashing down a wave on a boogie board is halfway between board surfing and body surfing and guaranteed for a first-time thrill. It's also difficult to hurt yourself, one very good reason novices rent or buy body boards for their first plunge.

"It's a piece of cake to catch a wave on your first session," volunteers veteran boogie boarder and surfer George Elwell, a Marin County realtor and the father of three children. "You can't beat a boogie board for riding the crest of wave just as it's about to break, then at the last second, dropping down the face. You can get deep into the tube on even small waves. On days when the swell is out of my league as a board surfer, I switch to the boogie board."

Leave it to Bob Wise to recount the ultimate anecdote of born-again surfing as liberation, at least of a kind. One day last year, a customer burst into his surf shop, and as Wise recalls, "the guy was in his late thirties or early forties, I'd guess. He stood there in the middle of the floor and said, 'To hell with it! I'm back! I stopped surfing fifteen years ago when I got married. We had two kids. We bought a house. We just got divorced. She got the house. It's 1968 again, and I'm back!' He looked around and started pointing, saying 'I'll take that and that.' He wrote out a check for his new equipment and walked out with the biggest smile you ever saw."

Call it escapist fantasy; call it second adolescence, still I think I know how that fellow felt about surfing. It has been 20 years since I climbed on my first board and, like Hector Lizardi and George Elwell, like Dr. Mark Rennecker and his buddies in the Double Overhead Association, I'm not about to give it up, not just yet.

*John Grissim, the author of Pure Stoke and four other books, is at work on a novel about surfing.*